

# THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

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## A LEGEND OF SYRACUSE.

FOR THE SATURDAY EVENING POST,  
BY MRS. ANNA BACHE.

‘Twas long ere Frier Bacon’s day,  
The classic tale I tell;  
No little halls, no Fairfax guns,  
No deadly shot or shell.

When on the walls of Syracuse  
The gallant archers stood,  
They grasped their bows, but worn-out strings  
Hung useless from the wood.

Around their feet in frantic fear  
Pale women weeping lay;  
Some shrieked, some sat in dumb despair,  
Some, trembling, strove to pray.

“Oh! could we only keep the walls  
Until the sun goes down,  
The screaming hosts to-night will come,  
And we might save the town.”

“But useless now the marksman’s skill,  
The bow a useless thing;  
There’s not a cord in Syracuse,  
Ope shaft of Death to wing.”

These words a blessing warrior spoke  
To a lady at his side,  
Who smote with trembling hands to stanch  
His life-blood’s flowing tide.

She listened to his faltering speech,  
An faint and slow it came,  
And suddenly a thrill of hope  
Ran warmly through her frame.

“Up, sisters! widows, wives, and maids!  
Bring out your knives and shears!  
For we can help Frier Bacon,  
With more than slugs and arrows.”

Then bending o’er him, from his breast  
Her husband’s dagger drew;  
Unbound her raven locks and out  
Their dark luxuries threw.

“Up! up! her cry went thrilling through  
The hearts and ears of all;  
Fast move the shining shears, and fast  
The lovely tresses fall.

From every street in Syracuse  
The eager women throng;  
And kneeling ‘mid the glory spilt,  
Twice loud they shout and strong.

With hope renewed, strength waxes too—  
Their bows the archers pry,  
And death-commenced on the foe  
The whistling arrows fly.

And so they kept fair Syracuse  
Until the sun went down,  
And woman’s wit, and woman’s will,  
From capture saved the town.

## The Mutual Consolation Society.

WRITTEN FOR THE SATURDAY EVENING POST,  
BY STEPHEN PAUL SHEFFIELD,  
AUTHOR OF “EVE ILK,” &c., &c.

[Revised according to Act of Congress in the year  
1865, by Henry Peterson & Co., in the office of the  
Chief of the District Court of the United States in  
and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.]

### CHAPTER XI.

It was not late when I reached Woodbine Cottage, and not feeling by any means inclined to sleep, I ascended to my room, and down by the window, and gave my thoughts the rein. What mad gallop these thoughts of ours take now and then. The past, with its pleasures and sorrows, its hopes and disappointments, its bright dreams and dark realities, is scanned as quickly as we run over the surface to a new novel, and then, away we go into the future and paint pretty future sketches, a good deal like those your wife produced when a school girl. She thought them pretty once, and so did you when you were young. One or two of them are hanging in your bedroom now, and you smile as you look at them. You never saw such impossible land scapes or such sky, such terribly blue streams and mountains green hills as they represent. The illusion that they are true to anything in nature vanished long ago.

The intellect of the evening had given me abundant material for thought, but my meditations were soon interrupted by the sound of voices, and I presently saw my aunt and Bingle slowly approaching. They stopped almost beneath my window, so that I could not avoid overhearing their conversation.

“One moment, if you please,” the poet said. “I have a secret which I have carried in my bosom for years and intended to keep there all my life, but I feel tonight that I must confess it. Will you listen to me?”

“Of course I will. Sit down on the door step and tell me all about it. I am fond of secrets. Is there a lady concerned?”

“There is none to whom I have promised to marry.”

“Ah! I thought as much,” my aunt said

complacently. “Who is it? One of the Boston girls?”

“Oh! dear, no,” groaned Bingle, “how could you imagine such a thing?”

“Why they are literary, and I am sure it would be quite natural for a young man like you to fall in love with them—not the whole five, but one.”

“Don’t mention the Misses Bottleworts again if you please, my dear madam. I couldn’t fix my affections upon a woman with red hair, ‘pon my word I couldn’t.”

“The young ladies have auburn hair,” my aunt said with some stateliness, “but suppose it was red, are they to go through life unloved for that reason?”

“I should be very sorry that such was to be the case,” the poet said gloomily, “but I love a very different woman from these young ladies—one who is immeasurably their superior.”

“Well, who on earth is it, Mr. Bingle? You know I shall be very happy to assist you if I can do so.”

“How can you ask me, when you must have seen—you couldn’t help it—how entirely I adore you.”

“What?” said my aunt, looking mystified and confused. “What did you say, boy?”

“Don’t call me a boy, my dear madam, when my heart is filled to overflowing,” cried the literary gentleman, falling upon his knees before her, and seizing one of her hands. “I was saying, and will say it again that you must have seen that I adore you—that your presence was the sunshine of my life.”

“Poor boy! he has lost his senses,” aunt Ruth said, compassionately patting his head. “I wonder what I had best do with him.”

“Make him happy by bestowing upon him the inestimable treasure of your love, alighted the unhappy Bingle, once more striving to seize her hand.

“Fiddlesticks! go to bed, you little goose!” I thought you had more sense, Mr. Bingle, than to talk in this way to a woman old enough to—well who is a good deal older than you are. I didn’t think you could be so simpleton.”

“Are you going to leave me without one word of hope?” poor Bingle said, still kneeling in the path, and gazing toward his retreating divinity.

“Can I never gain your love?”

“Good gracious! Bingle, you’re a blockhead! yes, a blockhead! I’ve a great mind to best your ears for your impudence. I will too—there!” and the excited spirit turned back, and dealt her would-be lover a sounding blow, and then entered the house, closing the door after her with a bang.

“Odds-bobs!” cried the stricken Bingle, as he rose from his knees and looked wildly around. “My hopes are crushed—her door is closed against me, and I have no resource but to seek the mercenary roof of Mr. Smile. Farewell dreams of happiness! Farewell Woodbine Cottage! Henceforth the poet knows you only as bright memories of the past!”

The literary gentleman pulled his broad-brimmed hat over his eyes, opened the gate and walked disconsolately away in the direction of the Buttonwood, his face wearing such a look of misery that it was pitiable to behold, while I leaned back in my chair and laughed till the tears came into my eyes.

Very soon I heard my aunt’s firm, emphatic step on the stair, and forcing a look of anxious concern upon my face, I opened the door and looked out.

“What! are you at home, Guy?” she said, stepping with one foot on the upper stair.

“Oh! yes, I’ve been here this hour or more, and was wondering what kept you and Bingle out so late, but it is a pleasant evening for rambling, and—”

“Good gracious! Guy, Mr. Bingle, what are you talking about?” exclaimed the wrought-up spinster. “What do you mean to insinuate?”

“Nothing of course, my dear aunt, only you and Bingle have been very good friends lately, and I didn’t know but something serious might come of it—that’s all.”

“Guy, you’re impertinent—very impertinent, indeed, and if this is a specimen of the manners you learn in New York you had a great deal better never have gone there. I shouldn’t wonder at all if you put the little goose up to it.”

“My dear aunt, you really must explain yourself. Of whom are you speaking?”

“You know very well, I am speaking of that foolish Bingle,” continued the good lady, angrily pointing backward and forward upon the landing.

“What has Bingle done?” I inquired, with difficulty preserving my gravity.

“He has acted like a dunce and a simpleton, and—I boxed his ears, as I shall certainly do again if I ever see him.”

“Do oblige me, aunt, by explaining yourself a little more clearly. Has Bingle incurred your displeasure by flirting with one of the Misses Bottleworts?”

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Guy—you are a greater dunce than Bingle. I won’t speak to you again tonight,” and the good lady carried out her threat by bounding into her sleeping room, and following her example I returned to mine, enjoying another huge laugh, and went to bed and to sleep.

And Aunt Ruth’s brow was still somewhat cloudy when she made her appearance in the breakfast room, and her remarks had an unusually bitter and satirical tinge, but I affected not to notice her ill humor, and made no mention of Bingle,

and the consequence was she gradually regained her wonted placidity of temper, and observed as we rose from the table.

“You had better go and find that foolish boy, Guy, and bring him home if he’ll promise to behave himself and not act like a simpleton again.”

“Certainly, aunt, but in what direction shall I look for the youth? He may have committed suicide for all I know, and should that prove to be the case would you wish his body brought here?”

“Committed suicide?” repeated my aunt with supercilious contempt. “How stupid you are! You’ll find Bingle alive and well at the Buttonwood.”

“I hope so,” I said, with affected anxiety, as I took my hat and went out, and soon found myself at Mr. Smile’s house. Was my friend Bingle there? I inquired of my publisher acquaintance.

“That he is,” Mr. Smile said. “He came in pretty late last night, very much excited, and acting strangely. There is something wrong. I’m afraid. He hasn’t been down to breakfast, but I passed the water, carried him up some coffee and toast and a trifling mustard chop, and left it on his table, though the gentleman swore he didn’t want a mouthful. Hadn’t you better go up and see him?”

I told Mr. Smile I would, by all means, and under his guidance I soon reached room No. 5, upon the door of which I beat a ringing tattoo.

“Who’s there?” exclaimed a doleful voice from within.

“A friend. Let me in—won’t you?” said the voice again, and acting upon this permission we entered.

On the edge of the bed sat Mr. Bingle, in his night attire, holding on his knees the plate of prosciutto so lately rejected, but with which upon reflection he seemed to have considered it would be best to fortify his inner man.

“You’re better now, ain’t you, old fellow?” Mr. Smile said, cheerfully.

“No, sir, I am not, and never expect to be,” the discarded lover said, dejectedly. “My disorder is not of a physical nature, Mr. Smile. I have loved, not wisely, but alas! too well.”

“Ah! that’s it, is it? A bad thing, Mr. Bingle, but I can cure you in no time. Brandy and water, not too strong of water, is the remedy for slighted affection. Shall I send you up a glass?”

“No, I’m obliged to you, Mr. Smile. It would have no efficacy in my case. Guy, my friend, good morning. I’m glad to see you, though I’m but a broken-spirited man, without hope, without ambition. I staked my all upon the throw and lost.”

“I understand she refused you,” I said, with my handkerchief to my eyes.

“Such is the lamentable fact. She is the only woman I ever loved, the only one I ever can love, and from this time forth I shall devote myself to poetry and the Mutual Consolation Society.” Here Mr. Bingle set down his coffee cup and wept.

“Come, Bingle, don’t be too much cast down,” I said. “You were rather premature in your proposal. You didn’t give the poem time enough to work. Take courage and try again to-day.”

“It will do no good. She—she hated my ears, and will never tolerate me in her presence again.”

“I wouldn’t stand that, I’ll be cursed if I would,” Mr. Smile said, resolutely. “Take her up for assault and battery, Mr. Bingle. You could get the biggest kind of damages, the case was so aggravated.”

“Don’t be irreverent, Smile. She is the kindest of her sex, and it is your presumption in me to aspire to her hand. Still it was a hard return for the love I laid at her feet.”

“It wasn’t anything else,” observed the publisher, feelingly.

“You take it too much to heart, Bingle,” I said. “I have heard it is no sign that a woman dislikes a man because she refuses him, and the truth is, my aunt sent me to bring you back, but the stipulations were to be no longer making till she says the word.”

“Then she has relented a little,” cried the poet, springing to his feet, and opening about the room in an ecstasy of delight. “Guy, you’ve been my friend. It is your interposition that has softened her resentment. Here’s my hand, old fellow.”

“Hello! then it’s Mr. Larrington’s respected aunt who jilted you?” exclaimed the suddenly enlightened Mr. Smile.

“You have divined my secret,” Mr. Bingle said, striking a theatrical attitude, “but as it was by accident, I demand of you as a man of honor that you bury it in your breast.”

“You mean you’d rather I wouldn’t blab,” Mr. Smile said.

“That is my precise meaning, sir. I always feel bound to keep the secrets of my guests. But I say, by the Holy Moses! ain’t you going in for rather a mature coquette, Mr. Bingle?”

“She is no school girl, I am aware; neither am I a boy, sir.”

“She can’t be called a school girl, that’s a fact. Why, I used to cast longing glances that say twenty years ago.”

And did she encourage your attentions?” demanded Mr. Bingle, assuming a belittling aspect.

“I can’t say that she did, and I’m amazing glad now I never asked her to become Mrs. Smile, for if she heeded your ears, I don’t know how she would have served me.”

“Come, gentlemen, I can’t let you discuss my aunt any longer,” I said, moving toward the door. “I’ll wait for you below, Bingle. Come alone, Smile.”

“Well, now, that young man is precious soft, isn’t he?” said he of the Buttonwood, as we descended the stairs.

I could not conscientiously controvert Mr. Smile’s opinion, and had enjoyed poor Bingle’s absurdities immensely, but after all I could not help pitying him, for ridiculous as his attachment was, it was sincere. To Bingle the world had never presented its brightest side, and his path had been tortuous and full of thorns. Of his birth and parentage he knew little or nothing. He remembered experiencing at a very early age a feeling of alienation from his family, and finding himself in the streets of New York, homeless and destitute, but the feeling gradually wore off after he had been there a few years, bringing as a thousand other little outside life, and heaven only knows how that is; and then he was picked up by an eccentric maiden lady, who sent him to school and made much of him for several years more, but she died one day, having previously made a will, bequeathing her property to the Cape Horn Mission, which as everybody knows has very lately converted a Passenger since its establishment, in the year 1850, and Bingle found himself alone in the world for the second time, and it seemed more lonely now than before, for the maiden lady had not seen fit to put him in the way of acquiring any useful calling, having made the discovery that he possessed literary genius; but the world wouldn’t believe in his genius, and the editors grinned over his productions and sent them back.

But Bingle could do nothing but scribble, so he that pursuit he confined himself. He made the acquaintance of one or two attaches of the press, and occasionally did a little reporting, and with this and by copying for the lawyers, he managed to supply his not very extravagant wants, and employed his leisure in the composition of literary articles for which he could never find a market. Bingle was accustomed to being regarded as a bore wherever he went. It was seldom that any one called at his hair in Ann street, unless they came on business of some sort, and he was quite of the opinion that there was no one who cared much about him, save the demons of the maiden lady, and although this did not make him a misanthrope, as it would have done many a wiser man, I dare say he had his moments of feeling wretchedly lonely; and when he met the kind old spinster who liked his verses, and was really interested in him, it was not remarkable that she became a divinity in his eyes, and as she was the only real companion he had ever found, who could love him, and from this time forth I shall devote myself to poetry and the Mutual Consolation Society.” Here Mr. Bingle set down his coffee cup and wept.

I was standing in the bar-room door awaiting Bingle’s appearance, when a hand was laid on my shoulder, and Mr. Wardwell stood beside me.

“How d’ye do, counselor, how d’ye do?” I had no idea of meeting my distinguished legal friend in this out-of-the-way place, but I’m glad to see you. Travelling on motive business, I presume. Do you find much unappreciated genius this way?”

“A good deal, Mr. Wardwell, and I’m glad to have so able a reader to assist me in my official duties. I read your speech in the *Democrat*—it was admirable.”

Mr. Wardwell laughed heartily. “That friend of yours, Wardwood, is a great wag, and he scolded the most strenuous joke I ever saw, but if the world takes it for serious respect, it’s all right. In fact it makes the joke so much the better. Are you stopping here long?”

“I am spending a few weeks with a relative,” I said, “and am really glad to see you. How prosper your case? Have you discovered the whereabouts of the young lady yet?”

“Well, yes, I think so, and I gave you the time you got back we shall be ready to do something, but when will that be, by the way?”

“I had intended remaining some days longer, but I can return whenever it is necessary.”

“Don’t hurry, counselor, don’t hurry. I’ve a notion to spend a day or two in this vicinity myself, and our business will keep. Good morning. I will see you again, perhaps, in the course of the day.”

### CHAPTER XII.

In process of time, quiet and harmony were restored to Woodbine Cottage, and our little household had once more fallen into its old routine of duties and amusements. For a day or two my aunt assumed rather a distant, haughty bearing toward the poet, who in consequence thereof, became mildly dejected, and continued to me his determination of escaping the life of this life and the bitter recollections of the past in solitude.

“The fact is, Guy,” he remarked, so we sat in our chamber one evening, “a man don’t get on very well in the world unless he’s some object to live for. Most people have—why want to get rich, or famous, or something of that sort—but I don’t think I ever had an object of any kind in view except to keep going, old I saw pop-

stant. I used to hope I should sometime write something worth publishing, but I gave that up a good while ago—I’ve written so many things that wouldn’t do; but I’ve no other way of spending my leisure time, and a fellow must do something you know; but it will be found hard to go back to Ann street, and go to writing poetry, with those infernal cats howling over my head, after staying in this nice, quiet little place. I shall have to, though, I suppose; and when I am hard up, write law papers for Twist and Wriggle, just as I used to; but this isn’t much of an object to live for—is it now? I swear I think sometimes I might better be dead. No one would care if I was, and no one would miss me.”

Fortunately for me, Mr. Bingle’s melancholy moods never continued very long. He would converse in the above unhappy strain, and an hour later perhaps be chuckling to me in the heat of spirits, the plea of a new Epic, which he was confident must succeed, notwithstanding the fate of so many of its predecessors, turned him what to expect. But Bingle was a sort of philosopher in a diluted homeopathic way, and having found it weary work to tell up the hill of literary fame, as many a better man has done, and that he did not progress toward the summit very rapidly, was quite content to sit down by the wayside and give a good-natured nod to each of his colleagues as he scrambled past him, stifling their boasts and grumblings, and making themselves, oh! so weary, as they pushed forward toward the far-away fame where so few of all the multitude who set out for it, ever repose and wear the laurels.

But by-and-by aunt Ruth became gracious again, and returned to Bingle’s verses as completely as ever. So the young gentleman took heart and made another dash for immortality, but his music had taken a gloomy turn now, although the poet grew especially in proportion as my aunt returned towards him, and only song of hearts made wretched by unrequited love, of blasted hopes, and ruined ideal castles; of grave, too, where sorrow and disappointment find sepulchre with the worn-out spirit’s home, and turn to dust and ashes in its company, and aunt Ruth, appreciative of his outpourings just as she had done his less poetic effusions, and once put Bingle into ecstasies by dropping a tear on her knitting over one of his misanthropic passages.

Bingle visited Mr. Smile’s more frequently than had been his wont in former times, and strove to acquire a taste for strong beverages; but Mr. Smile was a discreet man, and gave the poet his brandy and water in no diluted form, so that no insubstantial fumes followed, and he was not a little pleased to find that mental sufferings had made him impervious to the effect of alcoholic mixtures, which under other circumstances he fondly believed would have rendered him shockingly bilious.

It was a severe ordeal for the poetical gentleman. The same and even the most bracing made him quail, but for the world he would not have omitted an important item in the unvarying history of unrequited love. In the works of fiction that had fallen under his notice, he had observed that those heroes who had met with disaster in their heart affairs, took to drinking or the profession of arms, and as the efforts of burning gun-powder was even more effective to his utterances than his position, and his organ of combinatorics very slightly developed, he chose the least disagreeable method of exhibiting the passion that consumed him, and made frequent pilgrimages to the shrine over which Mr. Smile presided, and looked suitably woe-begone when that honest publisher questioned him delicately as to the state of his heart.

While my good relative and the poet having thus amicably adjusted their little feud, were amusing themselves after the old fashion, the one in taking short cuts on the winged leaves and the other in observing with admiring eyes this epicurean performance, I had my own individual pastime, and managed to get along very well. Mr. Wardwell was still in town, apparently for a purpose, though I could not divine it, and proved on further acquaintance an exceedingly entertaining companion. Ever three days or more he was perfectly at home at the Buttonwood, and well acquainted with the frequency of that excellent brand, when he came to be acquainted, and engaged with his conversation.

It was one of his peculiarities never to agree with any one, and no matter what opinion was advanced, he promptly took the opposite side, and argued with as much force and energy, and pronounced such unadorned and unadorned notions that the sleepy little town was presently in a delightful uproar, and he was by general consent set down as a beacon of the most congenial type.

Editor Twiss had been scandalized by disclosing his fact that members and chairpersons were the great scientific theories of the age, and protracted meetings hangings; Dr. Rumbold was rendered furious by hearing that he had spoken favorably of hygienic packing as a curative process; and Mr. Bottleworts lifted up his hands in undignified horror, when he told him to his face that he had been a Federalist, and had voted against General Jackson; and at last my aunt assumed rather a distant, haughty bearing toward the poet, who in consequence thereof, became mildly dejected, and continued to me his determination of escaping the life of this life and the bitter recollections of the past in solitude.

“The fact is, Guy,” he remarked, so we sat in our chamber one evening, “a man don’t get on very well in the world unless he’s some object to live for. Most people have—why want to get rich, or famous, or something of that sort—but I don’t think I ever had an object of any kind in view except to keep going, old I saw pop-







19 A correspondent asks why certain persons are so eager as to insist that the black shall be included in the pale of society.



100



with a wild inarticulate cry to shield him with her body from what she knew must follow; and the sword of Yarek, aimed at her father's head with all the strength which hate and the desire











